Decline in tea production

295. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Tea production has gone down significantly in 1999 as compared to 1998;

(b) if so, the production of Tea in 1998 and 1999;

(c) what are the causes for this decline;

(d) whether exports have also been affected;

(e) what efforts the tea Board has made to recover lost grounds in exports and also domestic production; and

(f) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Production of tea during the year 1999 was 805.61 M. Kgs. (provisional) as against 870.40 M. Kgs during 1998. Downfall in production during 1999 is mainly due to severe drought during the first quarter of 1999 followed by floods in the later part of the year in some of the tea growing areas.

(d) to (f) Exports during 1999 have also been lower by 20.16 M. Kgs as compared to previous year.

Steps taken to increase production of tea include financial assistance by tea Board to the tea industry through its various developmental schemes for encouraging extension planting, re-planting, rejuvenation pruning, infilling, creation of irrigation facilities and drainage etc.

With a view to increase exports of tea, the Government/Tea Board have been analysing country-wise exports of tea giving special attention to areas offering potential. Tea Board also acts to remove bottlenecks in exports to individual markets whenever these are noticed. Other steps taken to increase exports of Indian tea include:—

(i) participation in major trade fairs/exhibitions abroad;

(ii) field sampling at speciality stores and in principal markets.

(iii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness of the speciality of Indian teas and to popularise the Tea Board marketing symbol which stands for pure Indian tea.

(iv) exchange of tea delegations between India and tea importing countries.